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SUBJECT: SLOVAK RESPONSE TO U.S. CITES PROPOSALS

REF: STATE 6668

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: According to Slovakia's lead CITES negotiator, Dana Kmecova, the Slovaks will almost certainly follow consensus EU positions on U.S. proposals being made at the upcoming conference. She told us that the EU positions will not be finalized until a March 3 meeting, but that she expected the EU to support the proposals regarding sharks, coral, and snakes; and oppose the lynx proposal. Kmecova said she was uncertain whether the EU would support the polar bear proposal and expressed skepticism about the arguments being made by the U.S.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Regarding the U.S. proposal to remove the bobcat from Appendix II, Kmecova noted that Slovakia is home to a significant number of Eurasian lynx, and so the Slovaks are particularly sensitive to this proposal. She acknowledged the U.S.-produced identification guide to differentiate between bobcats and Eurasian lynx, but argued that it was insufficient, saying that the species' furs are indistinguishable when lacking ears and tail. Kmecova said she expected the EU to oppose removal of the bobcat.

¶3. (SBU) As for the proposed transfer of polar bears from Appendix II to Appendix I, Kmecova told us that the EU position remains undecided, although she thought opposition was likely. Kmecova questioned the rationale for the U.S. proposal, saying that while there are many threats to polar bear populations, she doesn't believe that trade is one of them.

¶4. (SBU) Aside from Dana Kmecova (+421 (2) 5956 2170, dana.kmecova@enviro.gov.sk), Lubica Safranova (+421 (2) 5956 2270, lubica.safranova@enviro.gov.sk) is expected to join Slovakia's two-person delegation to the COP.

EDDINS